

The Princess, frankly, was a disappointment.
Flatulant and gauche, she seemed most passionate to
uncoil her fall of golden hair, smear ointment
on her pimples, don dungarees, and rendezvous

before the TV with potato chips.
But her wicked stepmother -- a dark exotic thing:
sloe eyes of Sheba, Cleopatra's lips,
hair black and glossy as a raven's wing.

I was not forty; she was not thirteen;
all place this palace. Who would not kill a clown --
that sniggering King -- to win such a witching Queen?
like Antony, choose to lose a real world's crown?

-- John Wheatcroft

Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Amerika -- or Franz Doe

It's like when you're saying something
And someone interrupts you to point
Out the butterflies in a passage of Bovary,
Or when your best friend won't tell you
Who knows something's rotten in Denmark.
Or when your nephew who's ever so young
Vomits on your new bought business suit
Spotting it chalky white against the gray.
When some professor who really knows it all
Expects you to get excited over a word
Written in German seventeen letters long
Resembling nothing like the liverwurst you
Ate for lunch enjoying its taste
And forgetting the sound of its word.
Or like the last time you were swimming
In the ocean and a glob of something
You'd rather forget floated languidly along side
As if to say I'm here and as much a part of this
As you'll ever be.

And you wonder about the globby butterflies
That fly out of infant mouths which
Reject the best years you've given to
Feed those gaping gulfs and you laughingly scream
A seventeen letter English word that
Is no more than a taste you remember
And a meaning you have forgotten.

-- Chris Hargrove

Long Beach, California